Hieronymus Bosch
In 1951, Wilhelm Fränger's tome, The Millennium of Hieronymus Bosch: Outlines of a New Interpretation, was translated into English. The book created a sensation, both on the scholarly and the popular levels. An article on the book accompanied by color illustrations in Life Magazine probably did more than anything else to popularize Bosch, because there had been little or nothing of the sort published on him at the time. Fränger's interpretation that Bosch did his major altarpieces not for orthodox religious purposes, but for use by quasi-religious cults was being promoted as a turning-point in the understanding of this enigmatic artist.

While most art historians who have taken up Bosch in the years since Fränger's death in 1964 have renounced Fränger's contentions, there are still some who continue to endorse his assertion that the grand master of a cult of Adamites dictated its secret imagery to Bosch which he then revealed in his great painting in the Prado Museum, The Garden of Earthly Delights (p. 26-27), and in several minor paintings.

The writers who commented upon Bosch in the nearly five centuries following his death compounded such a reputation for the man as a "faizeur de diables" (Gossart), that until the modern period he was hardly considered an artist at all.

It was largely his frenzied hell scenes that attracted such attention. When he depicted the creatures and settings of these "hells" in terms of infinitely detailed naturalism, they were so convincing as to seem pure evocation.

To the medieval mind, the man who could reveal so plainly its own worst fears must have been a wizard or a madman, perhaps the tool of the Devil himself. Later writers either reflected this point of view or, following the rationalist aftermath of the Renaissance and the Reformation, passed Bosch off as representing the worst of Medievalism.

When he was mentioned it was not so much as an artist, but as a freak performer. Eventually Bosch was obscured and forgotten. It took at least two centuries until there was a revival of interest in him, in the late nineteenth century.

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1. Death of a Miser, oil on panel, National Gallery of Art, Washington (said to have been hanging over Philip II’s bed in the Escorial at the time of his death; now said to have been part of an altarpiece)
2. *Cure of Folly*, also called *The Extraction of the Stone of Folly*, oil on panel, 48 x 35 cm, Prado Museum, Madrid